1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012

Place-Names

We have already noted the intimate connexion existing on the one hand between the dancing-ground (with its attendant *ghamal*) and the Maki, together with the fact that each village originated in its dancing-ground, and on the other hand between the Quarter-Lodges and "Sides of the Lodge" and the more domestic details of everyday life and mortuary practice as seen in the fact that they adjoin the family cemeteries. Place-names are often a reliable guide, on the one hand to origins and on the other to the present-day attitude of natives towards the places named. It will therefore be useful here briefly to examine the meaning of the Vao village and lodge names.

Villages.

Of the six village names, three, and possibly four, are connected with the Maki and reflect the all-important rôle this institution plays in village life. Thus, the name Pete-hul means "High Stone" (from *pet*, meaning "stone" and *hul*, "high"). Peter-ihi similarly means "Three Stones" (from *peter*, also meaning "stone"—possibly an archaic plural—and *ihi*, archaic for "three"). These both refer to the megalithic aspect of the Maki. Togh-vanu refers to its spiritual aspect, and means "The Place of Retreat" (from *togh*, "to remain," and *vanu*, "village" or "place"), referring to the vows taken by performers of the Maki rite not to stir from the village for a stated period, sometimes amounting to years, but to remain passively intent on the sacrifice they have performed.[1] These names are all closely connected with the dancing-ground with its stones and images, where in each case the village is said to have been founded, and with the *ghamal*, where the intensest period of retreat takes place. The name of the fourth village is Venu, having the same derivation as *vanu*, and meaning "village" or "place."

The name Singon is, on the contrary, purely topographical, being so called from the promontory (*singon* means "lip" or "promontory") near which it stands. The meaning of the sixth village name, Norohure, I do not know.

It is worth noting that, of the six villages, the two whose names specially refer to stones, namely Pete-hul and Peter-ihi, and so also by implication to the Maki, belong to different Sides of the Island, each being the most important village on its own Side, but, on the contrary, that all names not directly connected specifically with the Maki are situated on the Inferior or seaward Side.

[1] See pp. 399 ff.